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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 04/10/07

- 1) Top headlines
- 2) Editorials
- 3) Prime Minister's daily schedule

Visit of Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki:

- 4) Prime ministers Abe, Maliki agree to build a strategic relationship between Japan and Iraq
- 5) Japan strengthening ties with Iraq as part of policy effort to secure vital resources

Visit of Chinese Premier Wen:

- 6) China sending prime minister to Japan as part of drive to improve relations with Japan
- 7) China to promise cooperation to resolve Japan's abduction issue in joint statement during premier's visit
- 8) Government to start this fiscal year an energy-conservation project with China that may set the "Asian standard" for global-warming countermeasures

North Korea problem:

- 9) Assistant Secretary Hill, transiting Japan, confirms US-Japan cooperation on restarting six-party talks with North Korea
- 10) Government will today extend sanctions against North Korea for another six months

- 11) Japan Business Federation (Keidanren) urges government to speed up preparation for US-Japan economic pact

Local elections analysis:

- 12) Mainichi exit polls in Sunday's gubernatorial races queried voters about Upper House election party preferences to gauge level of confrontation of major parties
13) In 47 municipal and prefectural assembly races, LDP garnered 1310 seats; Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) took 416, a big jump from last election
14) Minshuto jumped from 235 to 375 in 44 prefectural assemblies
15) Local elections underscore early trend of New Komeito starting to distance itself from LDP

Articles:

1) TOP HEADLINES

Asahi:

Simulation trials show professional judges may overly lead lay judges' views

Mainichi & Sankei:

Health Ministry in first guidelines proposes entrusting judgment to medical teams on whether to continue life support for terminal patients

Yomiuri:

Comsun obtains business licenses for three nursing care centers through fraudulent applications

Nihon Keizai:

Japanese, US leading firms, including Hitachi, expanding research and development units in China

Tokyo Shimbun:

Education Rebuilding Council proposes differentiating wages based on

TOKYO 00001545 002 OF 010

evaluations

Akahata:

JCP Central Committee issues report on results in first round of nationwide local elections

2) EDITORIALS

Asahi:

- (1) All political parties lacking in spirit in local elections
- (2) Increase the number of doctors for children

Mainichi:

- (1) Ishihara, elected to third term, must swiftly implement campaign pledges
- (2) Shiga assembly election: Let's send out ripples, starting with Lake Biwa

Yomiuri:

- (1) Iraqi prime minister's Japan visit: Japan must make strategic arrangements in terms of energy strategy
- (2) Revised Equal Employment Law: Foster better working environment for both men and women

Nihon Keizai:

- (1) Bill to unify pensions designed to benefit bureaucrats
- (2) Presidential election and agony of East Timor

Sankei:

- (1) Japan's bid to host 2016 Olympic Games: Future vision must be shown for mature metropolis
- (2) Japanese Association of Medical Sciences meeting: Reflect up-to-date knowledge in healthcare measures

Tokyo Shimbun:

- (1) Countermeasures to global warming: World's attitude beginning to change
- (2) Revision of Copyright Law: Caution needed for restricting private reproductions

Akahata:

(1) Bill to create human resources bank goes against public call for banning Amakudari practice

3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, April 9

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
April 10, 2007

09:47

Met with Asian Development Bank Governor Kuroda and Vice Financial Minister for International Financial Affairs Watanabe.

11:03

Met with Vice Foreign Minister Yachi.

12:01

Government-ruing parties liaison council meeting.

14:00

TOKYO 00001545 003 OF 010

Met with Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Amari and Resources and Energy Agency Director General Mochizuki. Agriculture Minister Matsuoka and Ambassador Yokota for international trade and economic affairs of the Foreign Ministry joined, after Mochizuki left. Matsuoka remained.

15:22

Met with Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Matoba, followed by LDP Secretary General Nakagawa.

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16:37

Met with Chinese Ambassador to Japan Yang Yi. Foreign Ministry Asia-Pacific Affairs Bureau Director General Sasae was present.

17:03

LDP executive meeting in the Diet building.

18:18

Met with Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki. Then dinner party he hosted.

20:41

Returned to the official residence.

4) Premiers of Japan, Iraq agree to build strategic relationship, work together in a broad range of areas

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
April 10, 2007

Prime Minister Abe last night met with visiting Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki at the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei). The two leaders agreed to aim to build a long-term, strategic partnership in an effort to promote cooperation between the two countries in a broad range of fields, including political and economic affairs. Abe conveyed to Maliki his policy of extending the Iraq Reconstruction Special Measures Law for another two years and to keep Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) troops carrying out operations in the region.

Maliki is visiting Japan for the first time since he assumed the post of prime minister in May 2006. In the session, Abe indicated his plan to cooperate in the area of reconstructing Iraq in the future as well, telling Maliki: "A stable Iraq is indispensable for the stability of the Middle East and directly leads to Japan's national interests as well." Abe also urged Maliki to make efforts for national reconciliation in Iraq, where sectarian disputes are continuing.

Maliki expressed gratitude for Japan's assistance and stressed: "Iraq is making a challenge for a new age. We must further develop our friendship with Japan."

Iraq is the third largest oil reserves in the world, but its oil production in 2006 was two-thirds or so before the Iraq war. By strengthening relations with Iraq, Abe wants to somehow secure a stable oil supply from Iraq in the future.

An agreement was reached yesterday between Tokyo and Tehran on yen loans worth 103 billion yen for repairing oil refineries in Iraq's major southern city of Basra and other purposes. Both sides exchanged letters of agreement.

TOKYO 00001545 004 OF 010

5) Japan-Iraq summit: Japan to strengthen bilateral relations for natural resources; Japan to positively involve itself in reconstruction assistance

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
April 10, 2007

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe yesterday met with Iraqi Prime Minister at the Prime Minister's Office (Kantei). During the talks, Abe clarified Japan's stance of positively involving itself in the Iraqi reconstruction process, pledging the continuation of airlifting operations between Kuwait and northern Iraq by the Air Self-Defense Forces (ASDF) and the extension of yen loans. The two leaders agreed on the idea of building a long-term and strategic partnership for bilateral cooperation in a wide range of areas for political and economic ties.

Abe stressed, "The stabilization of Iraq is indispensable for the international community. It will also meet our country's national interests." He conveyed to Maliki that Japan has extended the Iraq reconstruction assistance special measures law for another two years.

Maliki expressed his gratitude and said, "Iraq should further develop friendship with Japan. He invited Abe to visit Iraq.

Japan's assistance to Iraq has started with cooperation for the US fight against terrorism as a major objective. However, the emphasis has now shifted to securing resources with the situation in Iraq thrown into turmoil. Iraq ranks third following Saudi Arabia and Iran in terms of oil reserves. However, its production amount stands at 2 million barrels a day due in part to the ongoing war. The contract to extend yen loans to Iraq worth up to 102.8 billion yen signed this time includes the restoration of crude oil export facilities.

Iran, Japan's third largest crude supplier, is increasingly being isolated in the international community due to its nuclear development ambitions. Abe will visit five Middle East nations in late April to strengthen relationships with them. Abe diplomacy is focusing on the Middle East, which has a significant bearing on energy security.

Iraq is also doing its utmost to invite foreign capital. Key cabinet ministers, such as the oil minister, the electricity minister and the industry and minerals minister, are accompanying Maliki on his Japan visit. Maliki yesterday met with METI Minister Akira Amari in Tokyo and said: "Some areas have restored public security. I strongly hope Japanese companies will make investment in such areas." European companies are positive toward making investment in such areas as the Kurdish autonomous region, where public security is relatively good. Japanese companies are still cautious about investing in Iraq as they are concerned about public security there.

6) Chinese premier to arrive in Japan tomorrow, aims to improve relations with Japan

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
April 10, 2007

Tetsuya Suetsugu, Beijing

Using the opportunity of Premier Wen Jiabao's official visit to Japan starting tomorrow, China intends to ease the mutual distrust that had grown between the two countries and make efforts to bring improving relations with Japan back on track through the implementation of steps to build a strategic, reciprocal relationship. Improving relations with Japan will directly be in China's national interest and also help it to firm up the foundation of its government. On the other hand, concerns are still smoldering in China about the question of whether Prime Minister Abe will visit Yasukuni Shrine and about Abe's foreign policy.

During Wen's visit to Japan this time, China plans to confirm with Japan the strengthening of cooperation with Japan in such areas as energy-saving, environmental preservation, high-tech and finance. China is under pressure to overcome such problems as energy shortages, the worsening environment, and the weakness of its financial system.

Ahead of the 17th Convention of the Chinese Communist Party slated for this fall, the Chinese leadership apparently wants to reinforce the foundation of the government by improving relations with Japan as well as keeping its foreign policy stable.

7) China's cooperation to resolve abduction issue to be mentioned in Japan-China joint document for the first time

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)
April 10, 2007

An outline of a joint document to be formed during summit talks between Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, who is to arrive in Japan tomorrow, and Prime Minister Abe, was revealed. The joint document will state that the two countries will further develop strategic, reciprocal relations as agreed on during the Japan-China summit in last October. The joint document will also include such items as the start of high-level economic dialogue of ministerial-level officials, the lifting of the ban on exports of Japanese rice to China, and China's offer of Japanese crested ibises. On the abduction issue caused by North Korea, the joint document will include the wording that China "will offer necessary corporation." Doing so will be the first time among the joint documents between Japan and China.

The high-level economic dialogue will be co-chaired by Japan's Foreign Minister Aso and China's Vice Premier Zeng Peiyan and deal with a wide spectrum of subjects, such as natural resources/energies, the environment, and the protection of intellectual property rights. On the history issue, the joint document will state "we will learn lessons from the unfortunate past" and declare the two countries will advance such programs as a joint history study of Japanese and Chinese experts and the disposal of chemical weapons abandoned in China by the former Imperial Japanese Army.

Regarding cooperation in the areas of the environment and energy-saving, a separate document will be formed.

The last joint statement formed at the time of a Chinese leader's visit to Japan was the one at the time of (then) Chinese President Jiang Zemin's visit to Japan in 1998.

8) Project to make Japan's environment-related systems into Asian standard: Government to provide international assistance, including revision of China's energy-conservation law

NIHON KEIZAI (Top Play) (Excerpts)
Evening, April 9, 2007

The government will launch a project to spread Japan's environment-related legal system and qualifications as Asian

standards. As part of such efforts, it will start a project to cooperate with China in its effort to amend its energy law. Japan also reached a consensus with Vietnam on a similar project. It will thus back Asian countries in their move to adopt environmental measures, which tend to be slow, compared with the speed of economic growth.

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao will visit Japan on Apr. 11 and meet with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. A meeting of energy ministers is also expected. Tokyo and Beijing will likely agree on Japan's cooperation with an amendment to China's energy-conserving law.

China established an energy-conserving law in 1997. However, since a government agency responsible for this law is not clear, the law does not stipulate a punitive clause. It contains almost no articles stipulating specific procedures on the implementation of the law. Calls for a drastic revision of the law have been raised from the private sector. The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry will dispatch experts versed in energy conservation and related laws to China. Japan will accept trainees from China.

Japan and Vietnam agreed in general outline that Japan helps Vietnam establish an energy-conserving law by 2009. The Vietnamese government will formulate an action plan to press ahead with energy conservation involving Japanese experts possibly by June. Those experts will also give advice regarding areas to be regulated and the way a punitive clause should be set.

9) Hill, Sasae reaffirm Japan-US cooperation for resumption of six-party talks

ASAHI (Page 1) (Full)
April 10, 2007

Visiting US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, US chief negotiator to the six-party talks on North Korean nuclear programs, met last night with his Japanese counterpart Kenichiro Sasae, Foreign Ministry Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau chief. The two officials reaffirmed a policy course for Japan and the United States to continue working closely for a resumption of the six-party talks.

Referring to the transfer of North Korean linked funds at Banco Delta Asia in Macau, Hill said after the meeting, "We have some plans. But we will have to wait for the next couple of days to see if we can implement them. (North Korea) will not start addressing the nuclear issue unless there is progress on the bank in Macau." He thus explained North Korea's failure to implement the agreement reached in February to shut down and seal its Yongbyon nuclear complex.

10) Government to decide to extend unilateral sanctions against North Korea for six months

TOKYO 00001545 007 OF 010

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)
April 10, 2007

The government will decide in a cabinet meeting today to extend for another six months the unilateral sanctions Japan imposed on North Korea in reaction to its nuclear test last October.

Japan invoked sanctions against the North on Oct. 14 of last year, with a time limit of six months. The sanctions include measures to (1) ban imports of every kind of products from North Korea; (2) prohibit vessels of North Korean registry from calling at Japanese ports; and (3) ban North Korean nationals from entering Japan in principle. Seeing no positive change seen in North Korea's posture, the government has decided to extend the sanctions prior to their expiration.

11) Keidanren chairman to call for accelerated preparations for Japan-US economic pact

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 5) (Full)

April 10, 2007

In a press conference yesterday, Nihon Keidanren (Japan Business Federation) Chairman Fujio Mitarai said in reference to a free trade agreement (FTA) signed recently between the United States and South Korea: "The agreement reached between the US and South Korea showed that moves pursuing bilateral economic agreements have begun in full swing. Japan must not lag behind this global trend." He then indicated that he would call on the government to accelerate preparatory work for Japan and the United States to conclude an economic partnership agreement (EPA), remarking: "I would like to work on the government to establish a joint academic, industrial, and government research at an early date."

12) Exit poll: Voting behavior in governor races correlating to this summer's upper house election

MAINICHI (Top play) (Full)
Eve., April 9, 2007

In campaigning for yesterday's gubernatorial elections held in five prefectures, including Tokyo and Hokkaido, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and the leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) faced off for candidates they backed. The Mainichi Shimbun conducted an exit poll of voters there to ask them whom they voted for and also asked which political party and which political party's candidate they would vote for if an election were to be held now for the House of Councillors. In Hokkaido, Iwate, Tokyo, and Fukuoka, 56-62% of those who voted for a candidate recommended or supported by the LDP answered that they would vote for the LDP and its candidate. Meanwhile, the pro-DPJ figure also reached 51-67%, showing a certain correlation with the pro-LDP figure. In Kanagawa, however, there was a distortion, indicating that the trend of urban voters is invisible.

In Tokyo, 58% of those who voted for Shintaro Ishihara, now elected for a third term with the LDP's backing, said they would vote for the LDP in the upper house election, with 12% of them choosing the DPJ. Among those who voted for Shiro Asano, a lost candidate backed by the DPJ, 54% said they would vote for the DPJ in the upper house election, with only 11% choosing the LDP.

TOKYO 00001545 008 OF 010

In Hokkaido and Fukuoka Prefecture, where the candidates recommended or supported by the LDP won governorship, similar trends were shown, with the LDP and the DPJ locking on more than half of those who voted for their respective tickets in the governor race.

In Iwate Prefecture, where Tatsuso Takuya, recommended by the DPJ, was elected for the first time, 61% of those who answered that they voted for Tatsuso said they would vote for the DPJ in the upper house election, and 62% of those who voted for Junichi Yanagimura, a lost candidate recommended by the LDP, said they would vote for the LDP. As seen from these figures, similar trends were shown in Iwate as well.

In Kanagawa Prefecture, however, voters came out with a different trend. Shigefumi Matsuzawa, now elected for a second term, was backed by the DPJ as a matter of fact. However, 35% of those who voted for Matsuzawa answered that they would vote for the LDP in the upper house election, with 32% of them preferring the DPJ. As seen from these figures, the pro-LDP percentage topped the pro-DPJ figure among those who voted for Matsuzawa, who was the successful candidate with the DPJ standing behind him. Among those who voted for Tadashi Sugino, a lost candidate who garnered votes mainly from LDP supporters in the governor race, the proportion of those who chose the LDP was only 47%, lower than that of those who preferred the DPJ.

Such findings indicate that there are many people who will choose a candidate to vote for in this summer's upper house election while going beyond the framework of showdown in the gubernatorial elections. This can be taken as featuring the electorates of urban districts. In Tokyo, which represents the nation's urban electorates, the governor race turned out to be a de facto proxy war

for the LDP and the DPJ in its last phase, with voters marked out for either party. In Kanagawa Prefecture, however, each candidate's election campaign did not go thoroughly with organized supporters. Instead, the Kanagawa voter came out with a trend that is peculiar to the electorate of urban districts.

13) LDP adds up to 1,310 seats, Minshuto holds 416 in 47 prefectural assemblies

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
April 10, 2007

The counting of votes ended yesterday for the 44 prefectural assembly elections. Adding to those elected to the Tokyo, Ibaraki, and Okinawa assembly members, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) now has 1,310 seats -- 110 fewer than it gained in the 2003 election -- in all 47 prefectural assemblies, accounting for 47% of the entire prefectural assembly seats, a drop of two points.

The main opposition party, Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan), holds 416 seats, up 161 from the previous election and 15% of all assembly seats, up 6 points. The number of assembly seats won by the LDP and Minshuto totals 1,726, which accounts for 62% of all seats, up about four points from four years ago.

The New Komeito has 211 seats, up four from four years ago. The Japanese Communist Party has 118 seats, down 10. The Social Democratic Party holds 56 seats, down 18.

TOKYO 00001545 009 OF 010

14) Minshuto wins 375 prefectural assembly seats, up from 230, showing signs of recovery in metropolitan area; Two-party system looming over horizon

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Excerpts)
April 10, 2007

In the 44 prefectural assembly elections in the first round of the nationwide local elections on April 8, the major opposition party Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) made a big leap, though still far behind the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. The nation's political scene has begun showing some signs of a two-party system. Minshuto squared off with the LDP in five gubernatorial races in which the major opposition party achieved only two victories. Nevertheless, Minshuto head Ichiro Ozawa's strategy to solidify the party's local footing seems to have proven successful with an eye on the Upper House election this summer.

A Minshuto executive indicated that the party's leap in the prefectural assembly races is far more important than the gubernatorial contests, saying: "After all, (most of the governors) who won the races are incumbents. What really matters is the number of prefectural assembly seats we won."

Local lawmakers, including prefectural assemblymen, are important not only because they send out messages on political parties' policies and visions but also because they serve as the main workforce in national elections. This can explain why Minshuto party headquarters played an active role in fielding candidates for the April 8 races.

As a result, Minshuto garnered 375 seats -- up 145 seats from the previous election's 230 (including those won by the now defunct Liberal Party) -- in the 44 prefectural assembly races, shrinking the difference with the LDP (including those of the now defunct New Conservative Party) by 246 seats.

It is particularly noteworthy that Minshuto won seats in six prefectures, including Fukui and Mie, where the party did not hold any seats in the previous elections. The party now holds seats in all prefectures except for Okinawa, where no seats were contested this time.

In Mie, six Minshuto candidates were elected. In one case an incumbent who had declined Minshuto's endorsement in the previous

election accepted its support this year. "Aversion to Minshuto has gone," a local Minshuto source explained. Another Minshuto source pointed out the party's growing positive recognition in rural areas. The party has apparently succeeded in solidifying its support base in regional areas.

Minshuto also made a big leap in the metropolitan area. In the five prefectures -- Tochigi, Gunma, Saitama, Chiba, and Kanagawa -- the party won a total of 78 seats, up 34 seats from the previous race. In the 2005 Lower House election, the party lost to the LDP in single-seat constituencies across the board. Minshuto is now showing signs of revival.

In contrast, the LDP's strength is now 101 seats below the previous level. Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa explained the LDP's poor showing this way: (1) the party reduced the number of candidates by 32 to cope with the number of total local seats, which is now 90

TOKYO 00001545 010 OF 010

seats less than before, and (2) the number of seats has increased due to municipal mergers, creating constituencies that can give an advantage to Minshuto candidates.

15) Unified local elections in 2007: Subtle distance between LDP and New Komeito; New Komeito backers take sever view of Abe cabinet

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Excerpts)
April 10, 2007

Thirteen gubernatorial elections took place on Sunday and eight candidates backed by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its junior coalition partner New Komeito were all elected. The two ruling parties now think that they were able to solidify election cooperation for the House of Councillors election this summer. However, it is clear that the Abe cabinet's approval rating among the New Komeito supporters has recently been on the decline. Observers see that friction has marked recent relations between the LDP and New Komeito.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe yesterday said with satisfaction, "As the ruling coalition, I'm relieved" at the results of the unified local elections.

After a meeting yesterday of the government and the ruling parties held at the Prime Minister's Official Residence, New Komeito President Akihiro Ota also told reporters: "The results stemmed from mature cooperative relations between the LDP and New Komeito. We were able to gain a foothold toward the Upper House election."

According to Yomiuri's exit polls, 75% of New Komeito backers voted for Shintaro Ishihara in the Tokyo governor's election, while 80% of them voted for Wataru Aso in the Fukuoka gubernatorial race. A person affiliated with the New Komeito commented: "Our supporters were reluctant to vote for Ishihara since he has a strong hawkish bent." If the Abe administration strengthens a right-wing stance in working on foreign policy, security, and the historical perception of the war, it might have a negative impact on cooperation between the LDP and New Komeito on the Upper House race.

Actually, New Komeito supporters have taken a sever view of the Abe cabinet. According to a Yomiuri poll, 70% of New Komeito backers had supported until January, but the percentage plunged to 50% in March, while 80% of LDP backers have supported the Abe cabinet. In a poll conducted in March, asked about whether Prime Minister Abe displayed his leadership, about 80% of New Komeito backers responded: "He is not as good as expected. He has yet to achieve results." Only 10% said: "He has steadily made achievements as he pledged."

One senior official of the religious sect, Soka Gakkai, the New Komeito's main backer, analyzed this trend: "They are still unhappy with Abe's decision to allow former Lower House member Seiichi Eto, a postal rebel, to rejoin the LDP." The senior official meant that New Komeito backers were distrustful of Abe, who had the party reinstate Eto, as well as let him run in the summer's Upper House election as a candidate for the proportional representation segment.

